THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) MiG-21 Bis aircraft (the latest variant of the MiG-21 series) are being upgraded to enhance their operational capability. The upgrade plan is not related to aircraft accidents.

(b) No. Sir. not in the context of the upgrade project.

(c) Not applicable.

(d) A total of 125 MiG-21 Bis aircraft are to be upgraded by the financial year 2004-2005.

(e) A total of 92 aircraft accidents have taken place since January 1999 due to reasons like human error, technical defects, bird hit and natural operational risk.

Fresh steps taken for Defence Procurements

777. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in the 'Asian Age', dated the 1st June, 2002 under the caption, "Defence Ministry takes a fresh look at procurements";

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the corrective steps taken by the Ministry in relation to procurement procedure in the light of the recommendations of the Chief Vigiliance Commissioner and the Comptroller and Auditor General of India?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Government have set up a Defence Acquisitions Council and a Defence Procurement Board, chaired by the Raksha Mantri and Defence Secretary respectively, with senior level representation of all Departments and Service Headquarters of the Ministry. An arrangement for mandatory and time bound scrutiny of all major procurement cases, worked out in consultation with CVC and C&AG. is in place. The role of authorised Indian representatives/agents of foreign suppliers has been defined and a system of registration laid down. In addition, it is the Ministry's constant endeavour to simplify the acquisition process.